adoption of alternative modes of disputes resolution, such as arbitration and conciliation.

The Government has also requested the Chief Justices of the High Courts to review the position of old criminal and some old civil cases as well pending in the High Courts and consider the need of recommending appointment of some *ad-hoc* Judges for clearing of the pendency of such cases.

Disposal of rape cases

3085. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Union Government are actively considering to issue necessary instrucions to the courts in the country to take a quick decision about rape cases as the one such case at Alwar (Rajasthan) was finalized only in 9 (nine) working days;

(b) if so, whether Union Government are considering to amend the law in this regard and if so, when; and

(c) how far such immediate decision shall avoid the rape cases in the country?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Instructions to any court in the country on the manner how and the time in which to dispose cases before it can only be issued by the Superior Courts, namely the High Courts and the Supreme Court.

In so far as expeditious disposal of rape cases are concerned, the relevant recommendation of the Law Commission made in its 172nd Report on Review of Rape Laws has been taken up by Government for taking a final view. It is expected that expeditious disposal of cases related to the offence of rape shall act as an effective deterrent.

Amendments in Hindu Marriage Act

†3086. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of amendments made till date in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Supreme Court has given some suggestions for making amendments in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955;and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 has been amended eight times till date.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Irretrievable breakdown of marriage is not a ground for divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. The Supreme Court in Navin Kohli *Vs* Neelu Kohli J.T.2006 (3) SC 491 held that because of the change of circumstance and for covering a large number of cases where the marriages are virtually dead and unless this concept is pressed into service, the divorce cannot be granted. The Court further observed that in our considered opinion the legislature must consider irretrievable breakdown of marriage as a ground for grant of divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. The proposed amendment in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 requires consultation with various persons/bodies.

Voting rights to NRIs

3087. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any follow up action has been taken by Government in respect of the announcement made by it regarding providing voting rights to NRIs and by what time they will be eligible to cast their votes;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) to (c) In order to confer voting rights to Indian citizens absenting from the place of their ordinary residence in India owing to employment, education or otherwise outside India, the Government introduced a Bill, namely, the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2006 in the Rajya Sabha on 27.2.2006. The Bill has been referred to the Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice for examination and report.

Rise in pending cases in Gujarat

†3088. Prof. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of pending cases is increasing rapidly in the courts in Gujarat;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.